

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

HD **Obama chides China, Russia at COP26 for 'dangerous lack of urgency' on climate change**

BY Paul Waldie

WC 1,032 words

PD 8 November 2021

SN The Globe and Mail (Breaking News)

SC GMBN

LA English

CY ©2021 The Globe and Mail Inc. All Rights Reserved.

LP

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping were among the few world leaders not to attend the summit

Former U.S. president Barack Obama has singled out Russia and China for showing a "dangerous lack of urgency" on climate change, admonishing the leaders of those countries for their no-shows at COP26 in Glasgow.

TD

"I had to confess it was particularly discouraging to see the leaders of two of the world's largest emitters, China and Russia, decline to even attend the proceedings," Mr. Obama told delegates at the climate conference Monday. "And their national plans so far reflect what appears to be a dangerous lack of urgency, a willingness to maintain the status quo on the part of those governments. And that's a shame."

Mr. Obama said it was up to the United States and Europe to lead the fight against climate change. But he called on countries such as India, South Africa and Brazil to step up their efforts as well. "We can't afford anybody on the sidelines," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping were among the few world leaders not to attend the summit, and both countries have been criticized for moving slowly on climate change. Mr. Putin recorded a video statement that was shown at the conference, and Mr. Xi sent written remarks. Both countries also have delegations at COP26.

Mr. Xi has not left China since the COVID-19 outbreak, and this week Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin rebuked the U.S. for taking China to task. "The U.S., as the largest cumulative emitter of greenhouse gases, should face up to its historical responsibilities and show greater ambition to reduce its emissions ... slogans are no substitute for action," he said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov defended Russia's climate program, saying his country was taking "coherent, thoughtful and serious" action.

Mr. Obama received rock-star treatment at the summit Monday. He was cheered as he arrived at the venue and received a standing ovation after his remarks.

Earlier he attended a symposium with representatives from island countries that have begun to feel the effects of climate change. "I'm an island kid," he told the gathering after reflecting on his youth in Hawaii. He said island states are "in many ways the canary in the coal mine" when it comes to global warming.

Mr. Obama was in office when the U.S. signed the Paris Agreement in 2015, and on Monday he said the pact had been largely successful in setting a framework for further action.

At the time of the Paris Agreement, he committed to cutting U.S. emissions to at least 26 per cent below 2005 levels by 2025. However, emissions fell just 4 per cent by the end of his term, then increased after the election of Donald Trump in 2016, according to Climate Action Tracker, which was developed by a consortium of non-profit science groups. President Joe Biden has pledged to slash emissions to 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

Mr. Obama said that despite setbacks at the national level - including four years of "active hostility" toward the science of climate change under Mr. Trump - many U.S. states and cities have pursued carbon-reduction programs. He also cited actions taken by other countries, including Canada, and corporations since 2015 as evidence that the Paris deal has been effective. "Paris showed the world that progress is possible," he said.

However, he said, the world needs to go much further. "We are nowhere near where we need to be at," he said. Getting national plans in place that will limit global warming to 1.5 degrees above preindustrial levels "is going to be really hard," he added. "The thing we have going for us is that humanity has done hard things before."

He also took aim at environmental activists, urging them to listen closely to people who have legitimate concerns about the cost of fighting climate change. While protests are necessary to raise awareness, he said, activists must spend more time winning over people who disagree on climate issues or who are indifferent. "We can't just yell at them or say they are ignorant," he said. "It's not enough to inconvenience them through blocking traffic in a protest. We actually have to listen to their objections and understand the reluctance of some ordinary people to see their countries move too fast on climate change."

Mr. Obama's appearance at COP26 was not universally well received. Some environmental activists criticized him over the failure of the U.S. and other wealthy countries to commit to spending US\$100-billion annually to help developing countries tackle the effects of climate change. The financial commitment was supposed to start in 2020, but that deadline was missed, and COP26 president Alok Sharma said it likely won't commence before 2023.

"I was 13 when you promised \$100-billion in climate finance for poorer countries," activist Vanessa Nakate said on Twitter. "The U.S. has broken that promise, it will cost lives in Africa. Earth's richest country does not contribute enough to life-saving funds. You want to meet youth. We want action."

Mr. Obama's intervention came as COP26 enters its crucial final days. Delegates are scrambling to finalize agreements on a host of issues, including how to set up a system to trade carbon credits, how to assess whether countries are meeting their emission commitments and how to set common standards for those promises in the future.

During a news conference Monday, Mr. Sharma acknowledged that getting a consensus on those topics was "not going to be straightforward." He added that "there needs to be a sense of urgency in all our negotiations."

Our Morning Update and Evening Update newsletters are written by Globe editors, giving you a concise summary of the day's most important headlines. Sign up today.

Follow this link to view this story on globeandmail.com: Obama chides China, Russia at COP26 for 'dangerous lack of urgency' on climate change

NS gcat : Political/General News | gclimt : Climate Change | gvexe : Executive Branch | gglobe : Global/World Issues | gdip : International Relations | gpol : Domestic Politics | genv : Natural Environment | gpri : Politics/International Relations | gvbod : Government Bodies

RE usa : United States | russ : Russia | china : China | glasg : Glasgow | apacz : Asia Pacific | asiaz : Asia | bric : BRICS Countries | chinaz : Greater China | devgcoz : Emerging Market Countries | dvpcoz : Developing Economies | easiaz : Eastern Asia | eurz : Europe | namz : North America | scot : Scotland | uk : United Kingdom | ussrz : CIS Countries | weurz : Western Europe

PUB The Globe and Mail Inc.

AN Document GMBN000020211108ehb8002mi

Search Summary

Text	"climate action"
Date	20210920 to 20231231
Source	The Globe and Mail - All sources
Author	All Authors
Company	All Companies
Subject	All Subjects
Industry	All Industries
Region	All Regions
Language	English
Results Found	487
Timestamp	25 November 2023 11:44 AM